

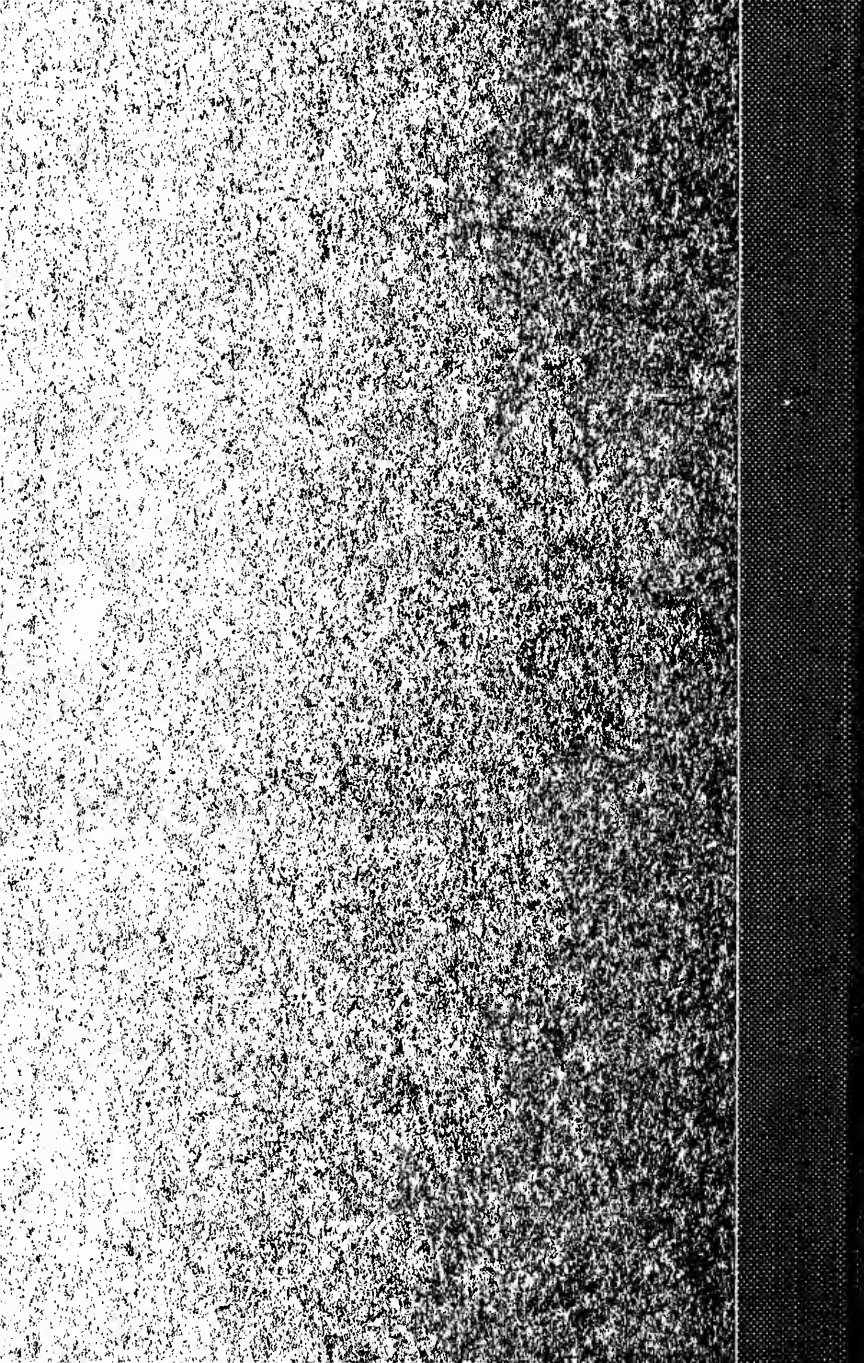


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MY REMINISCENCES

BY
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Translated by
SURENDRANATH TAGORE

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1916

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MY REMINISCENCES



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MY REMINISCENCES

(30) *Evening Songs.*

In the state of being confined within myself, of which I have been telling, I wrote a number of poems which have been grouped together, under the description of the *Heart-Wilderness*, in Mohita Babu's edition of my works. In one of the poems subsequently published in a volume called *Morning Songs*, the following lines occur :

There is a vast wilderness whose name is *Heart*;
Whose interlacing forest branches dandle and rock darkness
like an infant.

I lost my way in its depths.
from which came the idea of the title of this group of poems.

Much of what I wrote, when thus my life had no commerce with the outside, when I was engrossed in the contemplation of my own heart, when my imaginings wandered in many a disguise amidst causeless emotions and aimless longings, has been left out of that edition; only a few of the poems originally published in the volume entitled *Evening Songs* finding a place there, under the *Heart-Wilderness* group.

My brother Jyotirindra and his wife had left home travelling on a long journey, and their rooms on the third storey, facing the terraced-roof, were empty. I took possession of these and the terrace, and spent my days in solitude. While thus left in communion with

my self alone, I know not how I slipped out of the poetical groove into which I had fallen. Perhaps being cut off from those whom I sought to please, and whose taste in poetry moulded the form I tried to put my thoughts into, I naturally gained freedom from the style they had imposed on me.

I began to use a slate for my writing. That also helped in my emancipation. The manuscript books in which I had indulged before seemed to demand a certain height of poetic flight, to work upto which I had to find my way by a comparison with others. But the slate was clearly fitted for my mood of the moment. "Fear not," it seemed to say. "Write just what you please, one rub will wipe all away!"

As I wrote a poem or two, thus unfettered, I felt a great joy well up within me. "At last," said my heart, "What I write is my own!" Let no one mistake this for an accession of pride. Rather did I feel a pride in my former productions, as being all the tribute I had to pay them. But I refuse to call the realization of self, self-sufficiency. The joy of parents in their first-born is not due to any pride in its appearance, but because it is their very own. If it happens to be an extraordinary child they may also glory in that—but that is different.

In the first flood-tide of that joy I paid no heed to the bounds of metrical form, and as the stream does not flow straight on but winds about as it lists, so did my verse. Before, I would have held this to be a crime, but now I felt no compunction. Freedom first breaks the law and then makes laws which brings it under true Self-rule.

The only listener I had for these erratic poems of mine was Akshay Babu. When he heard them for the first time he was as surprised as he was pleased, and

with his approbation my road to freedom was widened.

The poems of Vihari Chakravarti were in a 3-beat metre. This triple time produces a rounded-off globular effect, unlike the square-cut multiple of 2. It rolls on with ease, it glides as it dances to the tinkling of its anklets. I was once very fond of this metre. It felt more like riding a bicycle than walking. And to this stride I had got accustomed. In the *Evening Songs*, without thinking of it, I somehow broke off this habit. Nor did I come under any other particular bondage. I felt entirely free and unconcerned. I had no thought or fear of being taken to task.

The strength I gained by working, freed from the trammels of tradition, led me to discover that I had been searching in impossible places for that which I had within myself. Nothing but want of self-confidence had stood in the way of my coming into my own. I felt like rising from a dream of bondage to find myself unshackled. I cut extraordinary capers just to make sure I was free to move.

To me this is the most memorable period of my poetic career. As poems my *Evening Songs* may not have been worth much, in fact as such they are crude enough. Neither their metre, nor language, nor thought has taken definite shape. Their only merit is that for the first time I had come to write what I really meant, just according to my pleasure. What if those compositions have no value, that pleasure certainly had.

(31) *An Essay on Music.*

I was proposing to study for the bar when my father recalled me home from England. Some friends concerned at this cutting short of my career pressed him to send me off once again. This led to my starting on

a second voyage towards England, this time with a relative as my companion. My fate, however, had so strongly vetoed my being called to the bar that I was not even to reach England this time. For a certain reason we had to disembark at Madras and return home to Calcutta. The reason was by no means as grave as its outcome, but as the laugh was not against *me*, I refrain from setting it down here. From both my attempted pilgrimages to *Lakshmi's** shrine I had thus to come back repulsed. I hope, however, that the Law-god, at least, will look on me with a favorable eye for that I have not added to the encumbrances on the Bar-library premises.

My father was then in the Mussoorie hills. I went to him in fear and trembling. But he showed no sign of irritation, he rather seemed pleased. He must have seen in this return of mine the blessing of Divine Providence.

The evening before I started on this voyage I read a paper at the Medical Collegè Hall on the invitation of the Bethune Society. This was my first public reading. The Reverend K. M. Banerji was the president. The subject was Music. Leaving aside instrumental music, I tried to make out that to better bring out what the words sought to express was the chief end and aim of vocal music. The text of my paper was but meagre. I throughout sang and acted songs illustrating my theme. The only reason for the flattering eulogy which the President bestowed on me at the end must have been the moving effect of my young voice together with the earnestness and variety of its efforts. But I must make the

*The Goddess of Wealth.

confession to-day that the opinion I voiced with such enthusiasm that day was wrong.

The art of vocal music has its own special functions and features. And when it happens to be set to words the latter must not presume too much on their opportunity and seek to supersede the melody of which they are but the vehicle. The song is great in its own wealth, why should it wait upon the words? Rather does it begin where mere words fail. Its power lies in the region of the inexpressible; it tells us what the words cannot.

So the less a song is burdened with words the better. In the classic style of Hindusthan† the words are of no account and leave the melody to prefer its plaint in its own way. Vocal music reaches its perfection when the melodic form is allowed to develop freely, and carry our consciousness with it to its own wonderful plane. In Bengal, however, the words have always asserted themselves so, that our provincial song has failed to develop her full musical capabilities, and has remained content as the handmaiden of her sister art of poetry. From the old *Vaishnava* songs down to those of Nidhu Babu she has displayed her charms from the background. But as in our country the wife rules her husband through acknowledging her dependence, so our music, though professedly in attendance only, ends by dominating the song.

I have often felt this while composing my songs. As I hummed to myself and wrote the lines :

Do not keep your secret to yourself, my love,
But whisper it gently to me, only to me.

† As distinguished generally from different provincial styles, but chiefly from the Dravidian style prevalent in the South. *Tr.*

I found that the words had no means of reaching by themselves the region into which they were borne away by the tune. The melody told me that the secret, which I was so importunate to hear, had mingled with the green mystery of the forest glades, was steeped in the silent whiteness of moonlight nights, peeped out of the veil of the illimitable blue behind the horizon—and is the one intimate secret of Earth, Sky and Waters.

In my early boyhood I heard a snatch of a song:

Who dressed you, love, as a foreigner?

This one line painted such wonderful pictures in my mind that it haunts me still. One day I sat down to set to words a composition of my own while full of this bit of song. Humming my tune I wrote to its accompaniment:

I know you, O Woman from the strange land!
Your dwelling is across the Sea.

Had the tune not been there I know not what shape the rest of the poem might have taken; but the magic of the melody revealed to me the stranger in all her loveliness. It is she, said my soul, who comes and goes, a messenger to this world from the other shore of the ocean of mystery. It is she, of whom we now and again catch glimpses in the dewy Autumn mornings, in the scented nights of Spring, in the inmost recesses of our hearts—and sometimes we strain skywards to hear her song. To the door of this world-charming stranger the melody, as I say, wafted me, and so to her were the rest of the words addressed.

Long after this, in a street in Bolpur, a mendicant *Baul* was singing as he walked along:

How doth the unknown bird flit in and out of the cage!
Ah! could I but catch it, I'd ring its feet with my love!

I found this *Baul* to be saying the very same thing. The unknown bird sometimes surrenders itself within the bars of the cage to whisper tidings of the bondless unknown beyond. The heart would fain hold it near to itself for ever, but cannot. What but the melody of song can tell us of the goings and comings of the unknown bird?

That is why I am always reluctant to publish books of the words of songs, for therein the soul needs must be lacking.

(32) *The River-side.*

When I returned home from the outset of my second voyage to England, my brother Jyotirindra and sister-in-law were living in a river-side villa at Chandernagore, and there I went to stay with them.

The Ganges again! Again those ineffable days and nights, languid with joy, sad with longing, attuned to the plaintive babbling of the river along the cool shade of its wooded banks. This Bengal sky-full of light, this south breeze, this flow of the river, this right royal laziness, this broad leisure stretching from horizon to horizon and from green earth to blue sky, all these were to me as food and drink to the hungry and thirsty. Here it felt indeed like home, and in these I recognized the ministrations of a Mother.

That was not so very long ago, and yet time has wrought many changes. Our little river-side nests, clustering under their surrounding greenery, have been replaced by mills which now, dragon-like, everywhere rear their hissing heads, belching forth black smoke. In the midday glare of modern life even our hours of mental siesta have been narrowed down to the lowest limit, and hydra-headed unrest has invaded every department

of life. May be, this is for the better, but I, for one, cannot account it wholly to the good.

These lovely days of mine at the riverside passed by like so many dedicated lotus blossoms floating down the sacred stream. Some rainy afternoons I spent in a veritable frenzy, singing away old *Vaishnava* songs to my own tunes, accompanying myself on a harmonium. On other afternoons we would drift along in a boat, my brother Jyotirindra accompanying my singing with his violin. And as, beginning with the *Puravi*,* we went on varying the mode of our music with the declining day we saw, on reaching the *Behaga*,* the western sky close the doors of its golden toy-shop, and the moon on the east rise over the fringe of trees.

Then we would row back to the landing steps of the villa and seat ourselves on a quilt spread on the terrace facing the river. By then a silvery peace rested on both land and water, hardly any boats were about, the fringe of trees on the bank was reduced to a deep shadow, and the moonlight glimmered over the smooth flowing stream.

The villa we were living in was known as Moran's garden. A flight of stone-flagged steps led up from the water to a long, broad, verandah which formed part of the house. The rooms were not regularly arranged, nor all on the same level, and some had to be reached by short flights of stairs. The big sitting room overlooking the landing steps had stained glass windows with coloured pictures.

One of the pictures was of a swing hanging from a

* Many of the Hindusthani classic modes are supposed to be best in keeping with particular seasons of the year, or times of the day. *Tr.*

branch half-hidden in dense foliage, and in the checkered light and shade of this bower, two persons were swinging; and there was another of a broad flight of steps leading into some castle-like palace, up and down which men and women in festive garb were going and coming. When the light fell on the windows, these pictures shone wonderfully, seeming to fill the river-side atmosphere with holiday music. Some far-away long-forgotten revelry seemed to be expressing itself in silent words of light; the love thrills of the swinging couple making alive with their eternal story the woodlands of the river bank.

The topmost room of the house was in a round tower with windows opening to every side. This I used as my room for writing poetry. Nothing could be seen from there save the tops of the surrounding trees, and the open sky. I was then busy with the *Evening Songs* and of this room I wrote:

There, where, in the breast of limitless space, clouds are laid
to sleep,
I have built my house for thee, O Poesy!

(33) *More About the Evening Songs.*

At this time my reputation amongst literary critics was that of being a poet of broken cadence and lisping utterance. Everything about my work was dubbed misty, shadowy. However little I might have relished this at the time, the charge was not wholly baseless. My poetry did in fact lack the backbone of wordly reality. How, amidst the ringed-in seclusion of my early years, was I to get the necessary material?

But one thing I refused to admit. Behind this charge of vagueness was the sting of the insinuation of its being a deliberate affectation—for the sake of effect. The

fortunate possessor of good eye-sight is apt to sneer at the youth with glasses, as if he wears them for ornament. While a reflection on the poor fellow's infirmity may be permissible, it is too bad to charge him with pretending not to see.

The nebula is not outside creation—it merely represents a phase; and to leave out all poetry which has not attained definiteness would not bring us to the truth of literature. If any true phase of man's nature has found true expression, it is worth preserving—it may only be cast aside if not expressed truly. There is a period in man's life when his feelings are the pathos of the inexpressible, the anguish of vagueness. The poetry which attempts its expression cannot be called baseless—at worst it may be worthless; but it is not necessarily even that. The sin is not in the thing expressed, but in the failure to express it.

There is a duality in man. Of the inner person, behind the outward current of thoughts, feelings and events, but little is known or recked; but for all that he cannot be got rid of as a factor in life's progress. When the outward life fails to harmonize with the inner, the dweller within is hurt, and his pain manifests itself in the outer consciousness in a manner to which it is difficult to give a name, or even to describe, and of which the cry is more akin to an inarticulate wail than words with more precise meaning.

The sadness and pain which sought expression in the *Evening Songs* had their roots in the depths of my being. As one's sleep-smothered consciousness wrestles with a nightmare in its efforts to awake, so the submerged inner self struggles to free itself from its complexities and come out into the open. These *Songs* are the history of that struggle. As in all creation, so in poetry, there is the

opposition of forces. If the divergence is too wide, or the unison too close, there is, it seems to me, no room for poetry. Where the pain of discord strives to attain and express its resolution into harmony, there does poetry break forth into music, as breath through a flute.

When the *Evening Songs* first saw the light they were not hailed with any flourish of trumpets, but none the less they did not lack admirers. I have elsewhere told the story of how at the wedding of Mr. Ramesh Chandra Dutt's eldest daughter, Bankim Babu was at the door, and the host was welcoming him with the customary garland of flowers. As I came up Bankim Babu eagerly took the garland and placing it round my neck said: "The wreath to him, Ramesh, have you not read his *Evening Songs*?" And when Mr. Dutt avowed he had not yet done so, the manner in which Bankim Babu expressed his opinion of some of them amply rewarded me.

The *Evening Songs* gained for me a friend whose approval, like the rays of the sun, stimulated and guided the shoots of my newly sprung efforts. This was Babu Priyanath Sen. Just before this the *Broken Heart* had led him to give up all hopes of me. I won him back with these *Evening Songs*. Those who are acquainted with him know him as an expert navigator of all the seven seas* of literature, whose highways and byways, in almost all languages, Indian and foreign, he is constantly traversing. To converse with him is to gain glimpses of even the most out of the way scenery in this world of ideas. This proved of the greatest value to me.

He was able to give his literary opinions with the fullest confidence, for he had not to rely on his unaided

*The world, as the Indian boy knows it from fairy tales and folklore, has seven seas and thirteen rivers. *Tr.*

taste to guide his likes and dislikes. This authoritative criticism of his also assisted me more than I can tell. I used to read to him everything I wrote at the time, and but for the timely showers of his discriminate appreciation it is hard to say whether these early ploughings of mine would have yielded as they have done.

(34) *Morning Songs.*

At the river-side I also did a bit of prose writing, not on any definite subject or plan, but in the spirit that boys catch butterflies. When spring comes within, many-coloured short-lived fancies are born and flit about in the mind, ordinarily unnoticed. In these days of my leisure, it was perhaps the mere whim to collect them which had come upon me. Or it may have been only another phase of my emancipated self which had thrown out its chest and decided to write just as it pleased; *what* I wrote not being the object, it being sufficient unto itself that it was *I* who wrote. These prose pieces were published later under the name of *Vividha Prabandha*, Various Topics, but they expired with the first edition and did not get a fresh lease of life in a second.

At this time, I think, I also began my first novel, *Bauthakuranir Hat*.

After we had stayed for a time by the river, my brother Jyotirindra took a house in Calcutta, on Sudder Street, near the Museum. I remained with him. While I went on here with the novel and the *Evening Songs*, a momentous revolution of some kind came about within me.

One day, late in the afternoon, I was pacing the terrace of our Jorasanka house. The glow of the sunset combined with the wan twilight in a way which seemed to give the approaching evening a specially wonderful attractiveness for me. Even the walls of the adjoining

house seemed to grow beautiful. Is this uplifting of the cover of triviality from the everyday world, I wondered, due to some magic age in the evening light? Never!

I could see at once that it was the effect of the evening which had come within me; its shade had obliterated my *self*. While the self was rampant during the glare of day, everything I perceived was mingled with and hidden by it. Now, that the self was put into the background, I could see the world in its own true aspect. And that aspect has nothing of triviality in it, it is full of beauty and joy.

Since this experience I tried the effect of deliberately suppressing my *self* and viewing the world as a mere spectator, and was invariably rewarded with a sense of special pleasure. I remember I tried also to explain to a relative how to see the world in its true light, and the incidental lightening of one's own sense of burden which follows such vision; but, as I believe, with no success.

Then I gained a further insight which has lasted all my life.

The end of Sudder Street, and the trees on the Free School grounds opposite, were visible from our Sudder Street house. One morning I happened to be standing on the verandah looking that way. The sun was just rising through the leafy tops of those trees. As I continued to gaze, all of a sudden a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance, with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side. This radiance pierced in a moment through the several strata of sadness and despondency which had accumulated over my heart, and flooded it with this universal light.

That very day the poem, *The Awakening of the Waterfall*, gushed forth and coursed on like a veritable cascade.

The poem came to an end, but the curtain did not fall upon the joy-aspect of the Universe. And it came to be so that no person or thing in the world seemed to me trivial or unpleasing. A thing that happened the next day or the day following seemed specially astonishing.

There was a curious sort of person, who came to me now and then, with a habit of asking all manner of silly questions. One day he had asked: "Have you, sir, seen God with your own eyes?" And on my having to admit that I had *not*, he averred that he *had*. "What was it you saw?" I asked. "He seethed and throbbled before my eyes!" was the reply.

It can well be imagined that one would not ordinarily relish being drawn into abstruse discussions with such a person. Moreover, I was at the time entirely absorbed in my own writing. Nevertheless as he was a harmless sort of fellow I did not like the idea of hurting his susceptibilities and so tolerated him as best I could.

This time, when he came one afternoon, I actually felt glad to see him, and welcomed him cordially. The mantle of his oddity and foolishness seemed to have slipped off, and the person I so joyfully hailed was the real man whom I felt to be in nowise inferior to myself, and moreover closely related. Finding no trace of annoyance within me at sight of him, nor any sense of my time being wasted with him, I was filled with an immense gladness, and felt rid of some enveloping tissue of untruth which had been causing me so much needless and uncalled for discomfort and pain.

As I would stand against the verandah railing, the gait, the figure, the features of each one of the passers-by, whoever they might be, seemed to me all so extraordinarily wonderful, as they flowed past, waves on the sea of the universe. From infancy I had seen only with

my eyes, I now began to see with the whole of my consciousness. I could not look upon the sight of two smiling youths, nonchalantly going their way, the arm of one on the other's shoulder, as a matter of small moment; for, through it I could see the fathomless depths of the eternal spring of Joy from which numberless sprays of laughter leap up throughout the world.

I had never before marked the play of limbs and lineaments which always accompanies even the least of man's actions; now I was spell-bound by their variety, which I came across on all sides, at every moment. Yet I saw them not as apart by themselves, but as parts of that amazingly beautiful greater dance which goes on at this very moment throughout the world of men, in each of their homes, in their multifarious wants and activities.

Friend laughs with friend, the mother dandles her child, one cow sidles up to another and licks its body, and the immeasurability behind these comes direct to my mind with a shock which almost savors of pain.

When of this period I wrote :

I know not how of a sudden my heart flung open its doors,
And let the crowd of worlds rush in, greeting each other,—

It was no poetic exaggeration. Rather I had not the power to express all I felt.

For some time together I remained in this self-forgetful state of bliss. Then my brother thought of going to the Darjeeling hills. So much the better, thought I. On the vast Himalayan tops I shall be able to see better and more deeply into what has been revealed to me in Sudder Street; at any rate I shall see how the Himalayas display themselves to my new gift of vision.

But the victory was with that little house in Sudder Street. When, after ascending the mountains, I looked

around, I was at once aware I had lost my new vision. My sin must have been in imagining that I could get still more of truth from the outside. However sky-piercing the king of mountains may be, he can have nothing in his gift for me; while He who is the Giver can vouchsafe a vision of the eternal universe in the dingiest of lanes, and in a moment of time.

I wandered about amongst the firs, I sat near the falls and bathed in their waters, I gazed at the grandeur of Kinchinjinga through a cloudless sky, but in what had seemed to me these likeliest of places, I found *it* not. I had come to know *it* but could see it no longer. While I was admiring the gem the lid had suddenly closed, leaving me staring at the enclosing casket. But, for all the attractiveness of its workmanship, there was no longer any danger of my mistaking it for merely an empty box.

My *Morning Songs* came to an end, their last echo dying out with *The Echo* which I wrote at Darjeeling. This apparently proved such an abstruse affair that two friends laid a wager as to its real meaning. My only consolation was that, as I was equally unable to explain the enigma to them when they came to me for a solution, neither of them had to lose any money over it. Alas! The days when I wrote excessively plain poems about *The Lotus* and *A Lake* had gone for ever.

But does one write poetry to explain any matter? What is felt within the heart tries to find outside shape as a poem. So when after listening to a poem any one says he has not understood, I feel nonplussed. If some one smells a flower and says he does not understand, the reply to him is: there is nothing to understand, it is only a scent. If he persists, saying: *that* I know, but what does it all *mean*? Then one has either to change the subject, or make it more abstruse by saying that the

scent is the shape which the universal joy takes in the flower.

The difficulty is that words have meanings. That is why the poet has to turn and twist them in metre and verse, so that the meaning may be held somewhat in check, and the feeling allowed a chance to express itself.

This utterance of feeling is not the statement of a fundamental truth, or a scientific fact, or a useful moral precept. Like a tear or a smile it is but a picture of what is taking place within. If Science or Philosophy may gain anything from it they are welcome, but that is not the reason of its being. If while crossing a ferry you can catch a fish you are a lucky man, but that does not make the ferry boat a fishing boat, nor should you abuse the ferryman if he does not make fishing his business.

The Echo was written so long ago that it has escaped attention and I am now no longer called upon to render an account of its meaning. Nevertheless, whatever its other merits or defects may be, I can assure my readers that it was not my intention to propound a riddle, or insidiously convey any erudite teaching. The fact of the matter was that a longing had been born within my heart, and, unable to find any other name, I had called the thing I desired an Echo.

When from the original fount at its core, streams of melody are sent forth over the universe, their echo is reflected into our heart off the faces of our beloved and the other beauteous things around us. It must be, as I suggested, this Echo which we love, and not the things themselves from which it happens to be reflected; for, that, which one day we scarce deign glance at, may be, on another, the very thing which claims our whole devotion.

I had so long viewed the world with external vision

only, and so had been unable to see its universal aspect of joy. When of a sudden, from some innermost core of my being, a ray of light found its way out, it spread over and illuminated for me the whole universe, which then no longer appeared like heaps of things and happenings, but was disclosed to my sight as one whole. This experience seemed to tell me of the stream of melody issuing from the very depths of the universe and spreading over space and time, re-echoing thence as waves of joy which flow right back to the source.

When the artist sends his song forth from the depths of a full heart that is joy indeed. And the joy is redoubled when this same song is wafted back to him as hearer. If, when the creation of the Arch-Poet is thus returning back to him in a flood of joy, we allow it to flow over our consciousness, we at once, immediately, become aware, in an inexpressible manner, of the end to which this flood is streaming. And as we become aware our love goes forth; and our *selves* are moved from their moorings and would fain float down the stream of joy to its infinite goal. This is the meaning of the longing which stirs within us at the sight of Beauty.

The stream which comes from the Infinite and flows toward the finite—that is the True, the Good; it is subject to laws, definite in form. Its echo which returns towards the Infinite is Beauty and Joy; which are difficult of being touched or grasped, and so do they make us beside ourselves. This is what I tried to say by way of a parable or a song in *The Echo*. That the result was not clear is not to be wondered at, for neither was the attempt then clear unto itself.

Let me set down here part of what I wrote in a letter, at a more advanced age, about the *Morning Songs*.

“There is none in the World, all are in my heart”—is a state of mind belonging to a particular age. When the heart is first awakened it puts forth its arms and would grasp the whole world, like the teething infant which thinks everything meant for its mouth. Gradually it comes to understand what it really wants and what it does not. Then do its nebulous emanations shrink upon themselves, begin to get heated, and heat in their turn.

To begin by wanting the whole world is to get nothing. When desire is concentrated, with the whole strength of one's being upon any one object whatsoever it might be, then does the gateway to the Infinite become visible. The morning songs were the first throwing forth of my inner self outwards, and consequently they lack any signs of such concentration.

This all-pervading joy of a first outflow, however, has the effect of leading us to an acquaintance with the particular. The lake in its fulness seeks an outlet as a river. Then, instead of trying to engulf, it proceeds to taste in bits. In this sense the permanent later love is narrower than first love. It is more definite in the direction of its activities, desires to realize the whole in each of its parts, and is thus impelled on towards the infinite. What it finally reaches is no longer the former indefinite extension of the heart's own inner joy, but a merging in the infinite reality which was outside itself, and thereby the attainment of the complete truth of its own longings.

In Mohita Babu's edition these *Morning Songs* have been placed in the group of poems entitled *Nishkraman*, The Emergence. For in these was to be found the first news of my coming out of the *Heart Wilderness* into the open world. Thereafter did this pilgrim heart make its acquaintance with that world, bit by bit, part by part, in many a mood and manner. And at the end, after gliding past all the numerous landing steps of ever-changing impermanence, it will reach the infinite,—not the vagueness

of indeterminate possibility, but the consummation of perfect fulness of Truth.

From my earliest years I enjoyed a simple and intimate communion with Nature. Each one of the cocoanut trees in our garden had for me a distinct personality. When, on coming home from the Normal School, I saw behind the skyline of our roof-terrace blue-grey water-laden clouds thickly banked up, the immense depth of gladness which filled me, all in a moment, I can recall clearly even now. On opening my eyes every morning, the blithely awakening world used to call me to join it like a playmate; the perfervid noonday sky, during the long silent watches of the siesta hours, would spirit me away from the work-a-day world into the recesses of its hermit cell; and the darkness of night would open the door to its phantom paths, and take me over all the seven seas and thirteen rivers, past all possibilities and impossibilities, right into its wonderland.

Then one day, when, with the dawn of youth, my hungry heart began to cry out for its sustenance, a barrier was set up between this play of inside and outside. And my whole being eddied round and round my stricken heart, creating a vortex within itself, in the whirls of which its consciousness was confined.

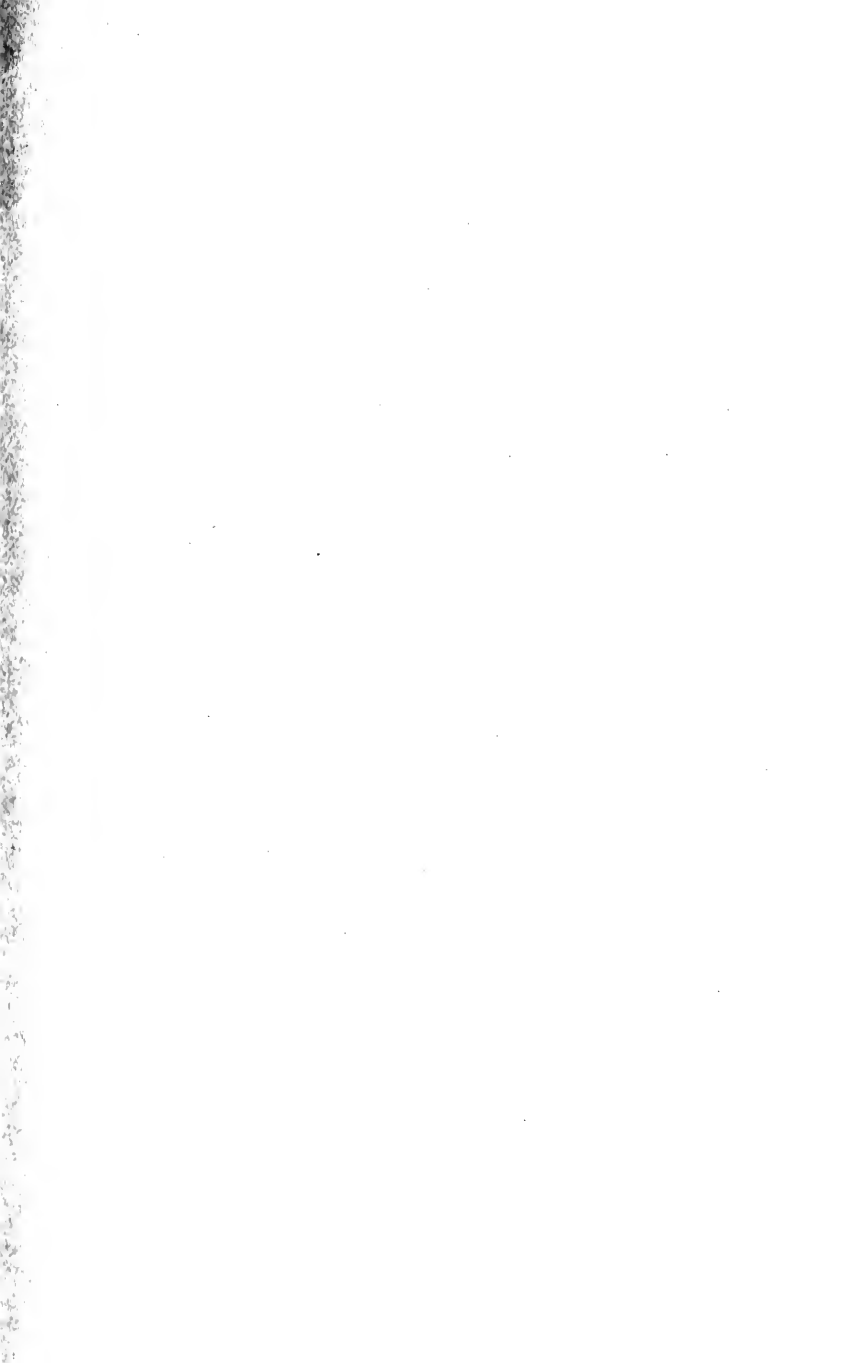
This loss of the harmony between inside and outside, due to the over-riding claims of the heart in its trouble, and the consequent restriction of the privilege of communion which had been mine, was mourned by me in the *Evening Songs*. In the *Morning Songs* I celebrated the sudden opening of a gate in the barrier, by what shock I know not, through which I regained the lost one, not only as I knew it before, but more deeply, more fully, by force of the intervening separation.

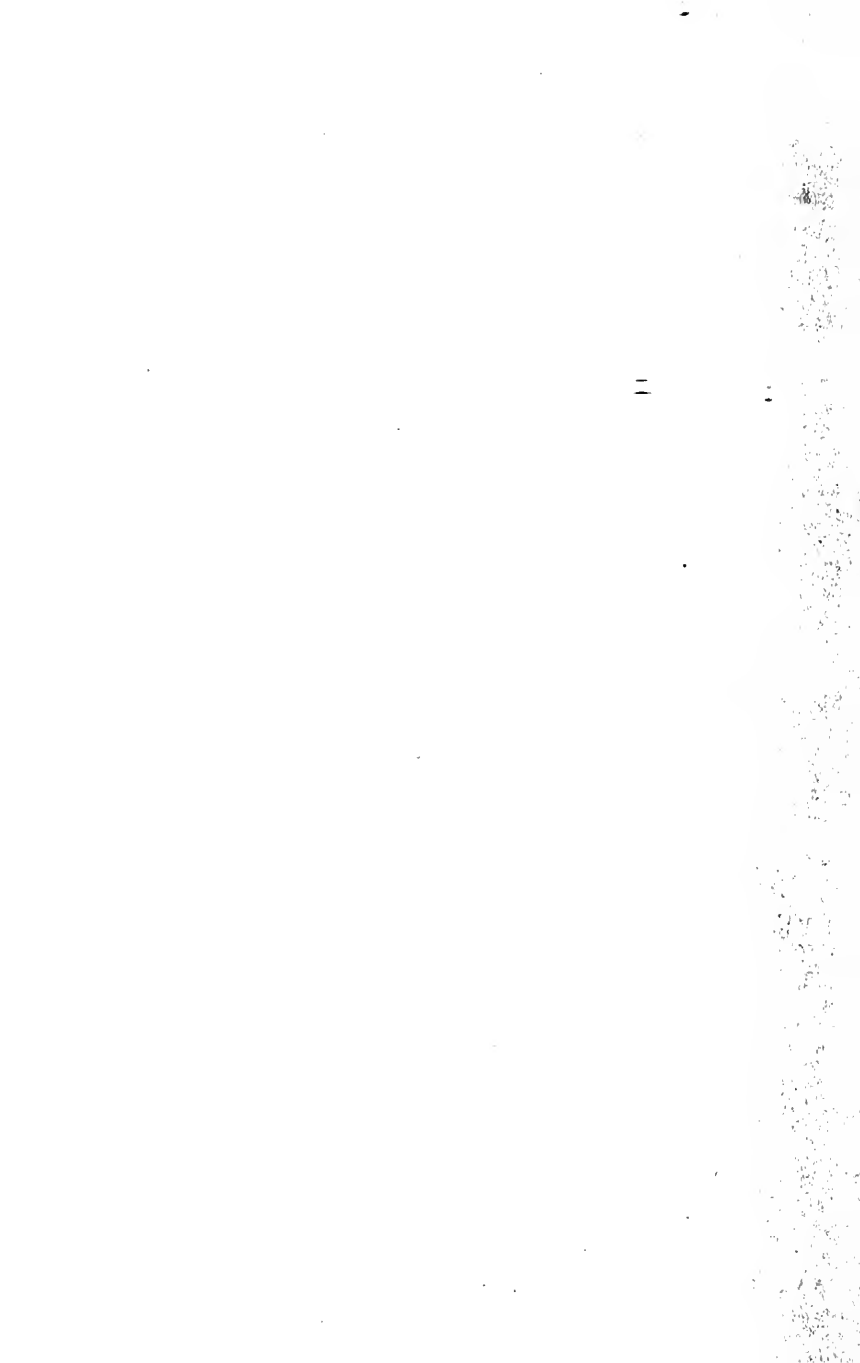
Thus did the First Book of my life come to an end with these chapters of union, separation and reunion. Or, rather, it is not true to say it has come to an end. The same subject has still to be continued through more elaborate solutions of worse complexities, to a greater finale. Each one comes here to finish but one book of life, which, during the progress of its various parts, grows spiral-wise on an ever-increasing radius. So, while each segment may appear different from the others on a cursory glance, they all really lead back to the self-same starting centre.

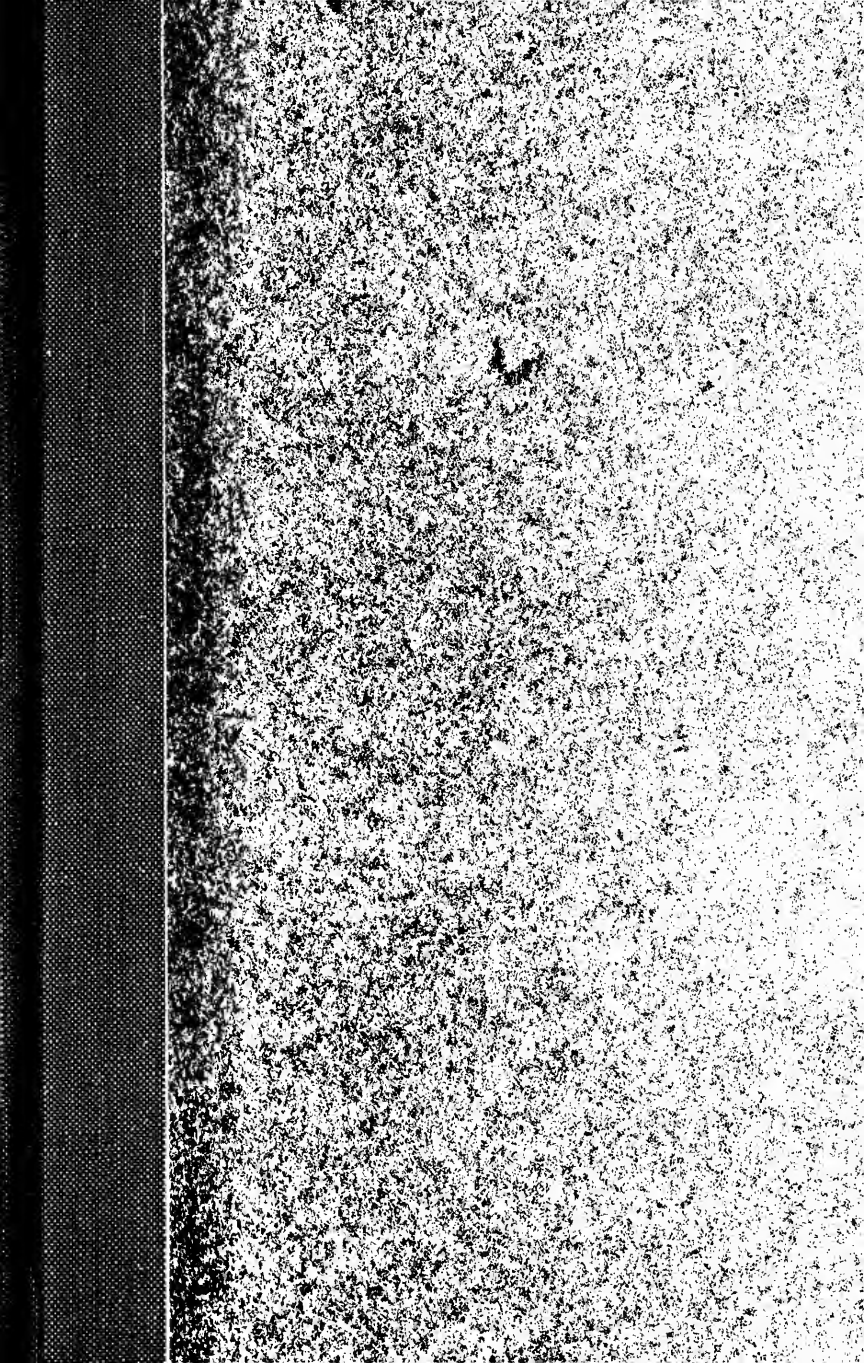
The prose writings of the *Evening Song* period were published, as I have said, under the name of *Vividha Prabandha*. Those others which correspond to the time of my writing the *Morning Songs* came out under the title of *Alochana*, Discussions. The difference between the characteristics of these two would be a good index to the nature of the change that had in the meantime taken place within me.

Translated by

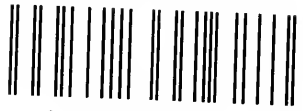
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